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ABSTRACT

The child in the bilingual education situation must be aware of the two languages involved as two separate systems corresponding to the two distinct cultural entities that are part of his environment. The child must learn to separate, yet identify with, each system as a useful and necessary means of communication. The teacher-directed method is being used currently to teach Spanish as part of a bilingual curriculum. According to this method, children receive teacher-directed instruction in Spanish as a native language and Spanish as a foreign language, in bilingual switching, and in rhetoric to teach effective speech in both languages and an awareness of human emotions in both cultures. Another method currently being used is the small group process which groups together children with varied language abilities, backgrounds, and academic skills. It is based on the theory that children from different language backgrounds, if exposed to one another's language in a bilingual setting which encourages and reinforces both languages equally, will develop the second language naturally and easily, while improving the first language. (Author/VM)

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SPANISH: A NEW APPROACH TO BILINGUAL PROGRAMS

How can elementary students with varying degrees of proficiency in Spanish be taught that language effectively in a bilingual program? With the inception of bilingual education in this country, initial efforts were to develop effective methods of teaching English as a second language, with less emphasis on correlating a sound instructional program which would incorporate the use of the two languages in providing a varied academic curriculum. A widespread assumption has been that children with Spanish surnames have first language proficiency in Spanish; therefore, their educational needs can best be fulfilled by providing an extensive ESL program, supplemented by a less sophisticated form of Spanish instruction. In truth, however, children placed in English-Spanish bilingual programs come to school with a broad diversity of efficiency in Spanish, ranging from first language proficiency to second-hand exposure.

The approach I will describe is one in which the long term objective is to achieve coordinate bilingualism as well as academic competence. In order to do this, the cognitive growth, social and emotional adjustment, and communication skills these children have experienced in early childhood should be nurtured in a classroom that allows for the diversities I have mentioned. For this reason, a structured freedom should be provided; i.e., structured to the degree that the learner is guided in the direction of meeting specified objectives, but free to make use of his early language development, as well as his innate language learning abilities in order to hypothesize about the learning that is taking place.

To achieve coordinate bilingualism, the two languages used in the classroom must be meaningful to the child. Since most children in these classrooms have had some exposure to both languages (in many cases a hodgepodge of both), it is first necessary to make the children aware of the two languages as separate systems, each with its own set of rules. In addition, to make a program a truly bilingual one, the cultural aspects of the two languages must not be neglected. (Culture in this case refers to the roles and values which affect the use of language within a

society.) The child must be aware of the two languages as two separate systems corresponding to the two distinct cultural entities that are part of his environment. Unless the child learns to separate and yet identify with each system as a useful and necessary means of communication, his role as a bilingual will be confusing. If he is unable to function and achieve success in the bilingual/bicultural environment in which he finds himself, the child may think of the classroom as a den of failure and frustration. This task of keeping the two systems separate is not one of merely identifying the languages phonologically (making auditory discriminations) or even using appropriate semantic and syntactic rules. It is all of these, accompanied by the ability to choose the appropriate language and to function both linguistically and socially in a particular situation. A program that fosters these concepts shows the child that his role in becoming a coordinate bilingual becomes one in which he finds identity with both systems. His task takes on the meaning of bilingualism as a means of fulfilling his needs through two independent systems, each one equally important, but each having linguistic and cultural authenticity. The concept of switching roles in response to environmental and verbal stimuli; i.e., functioning linguistically and socially in two distinct systems with complete control of each,[1] forms the basis for the approach I am describing.

With this premise in mind, I report on two methods currently being used to teach Spanish as part of a bilingual curriculum. One is a teacher-directed method, the other a small group process.

THE TEACHER-DIRECTED METHOD[2]

In this method children receive teacher-directed instruction in Spanish as a Native Language (SNL) and Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL) lessons to develop proficiency in the language; Bilingual Switching lessons to develop the notion of switching from one language to the other; and Rhetoric lessons to teach effective

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[1] Uriel Weinreich, *Languages in Contact*.

[2] This method has been developed by Consultants in Total Education, Inc., of Los Angeles.

speech in both languages and an awareness of human emotions in both cultures. A description of these components follows:

SNL and SFL Lessons

The core of this method is instruction in the linguistic aspects of Spanish. Because of the diversities in language mastery, the children receive a somewhat individualized form of instruction. Two sets or strands of lessons – SNL and SFL – are concurrently taught. The students are placed in either of the two groups, whichever provides them with the optimum amount of learning for their level of proficiency.

SNL, for children with first language proficiency, initially emphasizes awareness of Spanish syntax, semantics, and phonology, but quickly moves into cognitive development. In this case, structured inquiry through categorical questions is used in developing cognitive abilities as classified by Bloom in his *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Elements of social studies such as folk tales and authentic cultural items form the basis for the content of these lessons.

SFL, for children who have had little exposure to the language, emphasizes interpretation of basic structures and sounds of Spanish, concept development in the new language, and basic cultural understanding. The technique of extended listening is initially used in order to allow the learner to internalize the basic structures and phonology of the language, without complicating the task by asking him to produce the sounds. Through non-verbal physical responses the child is able to demonstrate his perception of fundamental grammatical structures and develop the ability to process information in the language.

Bilingual Switching Lessons

Developing awareness of the two languages as separate systems is the main objective of these lessons. The notion of keeping the two languages separate, and the ability to switch from one language to the other is practiced by identifying and producing the two languages in response to visual and verbal cues. Cultural corners, displaying authentic linguistic and cultural items, provide the appropriate setting for these lessons.

Rhetoric Lessons

Rhetoric lessons are introduced after the initial introduction to Spanish. This occurs when the children in the classroom have a grasp and understanding of basic Spanish structures, as well as being aware of the two languages as separate systems. The general objective of these lessons is to develop the child's ability to express himself effectively, while using language as a means of cultural understanding. The medium through which this is taught is dramatization. The content is a series of short plays or skits in which the prescribed dialogues and gestures express positive and negative emotions in both cultures. The plays are grouped in triplets, each triplet devoted to one emotion. These short (4 or 5 line) plays, which use only one language within any one class period, present authentic language and culture. In addition to the cultural value attached to this technique, dramatization provides practice in role-switching, a necessary skill in being a successful bilingual. Also, the constant rehearsing inherent in dramatization helps the child develop his articulatory and rhetorical abilities.

The method I have described integrates these Spanish components into a total bilingual curriculum. Instructional periods in English and Spanish are intentionally interspersed throughout the school day to provide situations that develop the child's ability to separate the two systems, as well as provide cognitive growth through varied content areas in both languages. After each formal lesson, a break period is provided for children to reinforce their learning through informal situations.

THE SMALL GROUP PROCESS[3]

In this method of small heterogeneous grouping, the varied language abilities, backgrounds, and academic skills of the children are combined to afford diverse teaching and learning possibilities. The rationale for this method is based on the following assumption: Children from different language backgrounds, if exposed to one another's language in a bilingual setting which encourages and reinforces both

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[3]This method has been developed by consultants of the Regional Project Office, San Bernardino County Schools, San Bernardino, California.

languages equally, will develop the second language naturally and easily, while improving the first language.[4]

Using this small heterogeneous grouping method to support this assumption reveals several significant advantages:

1) Children have the opportunity to learn group participation skills—leadership, organization, behavior, management, communication, and cooperation.

2) Children have the opportunity for peer teaching and modeling, which encourages them to teach and learn from one another. Thus, the children act as models for each other socially, academically, and linguistically.

3) Children learn self-management skills as a result of the independence and responsibility afforded them.

4) Children are provided with varied opportunities for oral language development. They talk freely with peers, discuss situations and ideas, work out problems, and implement these ideas together.

5) Children engage in manipulatory and discovery activities. Each child participates in activities using concrete materials, learning to classify, categorize, and solve problems.

6) Children have the opportunity to practice listening and speaking skills in both languages. The natural language setting stimulates and increases oral communication between children with varying levels of proficiency, and provides an effective means of peer evaluation.

7) Appealing activities with cultural and linguistic authenticity, such as those requiring the use of one specific language in order to participate, motivate the children to use both languages in meaningful contexts.

8) Children benefit from individualized instruction. Because children work independently during most of these sessions, the teacher can further attend to the needs of specific groups or individuals.

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[4]Jean M. Baker, et al., *Each One Learning*.

9) Children are awakened to greater self-expression by helping and learning from each other, thus decreasing the negative and increasing the positive feelings about themselves and their peers.

Because this method requires children to spend the major portion of their time in small groups without continuous adult supervision, skills and behaviors appropriate to small group instruction must be learned. A unique characteristic of this method is that initially the children learn and practice specific behavioral skills by means of training lessons. These lessons, which teach skills such as leadership, cooperation, communication, management, and organization, train the children to be group leaders as well as group participants. By training children to function in a small group, they are able to manipulate much of their own learning. It is these training lessons that provide effective student application of this small group method.

As the students learn new behavioral skills, the teacher's role also changes, from that of solely an imparter of information, to that of facilitator of learning and an organizer and manager of the learning environment. In this role the teacher alters the classroom environment to accommodate conditions conducive to this method of learning. An attitude of flexibility and free flow of movement is reflected in the classroom. A wide variety of instructional displays representing the two cultures and languages is evident. Attractive learning centers, accommodating the varied skill levels of the children, are developed around curriculum areas or organized in terms of projects and interests. It is the teacher who sets the objectives for the class, but much of the responsibility for meeting these objectives is delegated to the students themselves.

The technique by which several groups function simultaneously is the use of task cards which describe the steps a group must follow in order to accomplish a specific activity. The function of the task card is to give the group the necessary directions in meeting an objective, and it is the leader's responsibility to see that his group performs that activity as prescribed by the teacher on the task card.

Teaching Spanish through this method utilizes the great potential offered by the environmental and social conditions of the classroom. The child's intrinsic interest in learning and his innate curiosity about the environment are stimulated by the freedom

afforded for increased language and social interaction. I will not expound on all the possibilities for Spanish language development this method offers. It is not difficult for the teacher to plan activities around the varied language skills the children bring to school. In fact, the success of small group learning rests on this diversity of language mastery which provides the necessary conditions for peer teaching and modeling.

The problems of teaching Spanish in a bilingual classroom are still far from being solved. I have tried to describe two methods being used today, which are getting closer to the solutions needed; however, more research and development is needed to achieve the theoretical goals of a bilingual program. The attainment of coordinate bilingualism involves more than just teaching Spanish, or even English, at the appropriate level. Perhaps the most important task a teacher has is to establish a psychological atmosphere that is conducive to the social as well as academic growth of the child in the classroom. To teach a child dual language skills is, by itself, only a minimal contribution to his full development as an effective human being. Absolutely essential is the day-to-day demonstration in the school of the importance and value placed upon the language and culture the child brings to the classroom. There should be no difference in the extent to which the school environment encourages and reinforces either language. The equality of status of languages, cultures, and ethnicity can be maintained by helping the child achieve knowledge of, and pride in, his culture. This concept also develops awareness and appreciation of the cultural and ethnic differences represented in the classroom. By encouraging these positive attitudes, the school also promotes the child's sense of autonomy; i.e., his self-image as an individual who can function appropriately in the bilingual/bicultural setting in which he finds himself. This sense of autonomy enables him to manage much of his own learning, to initiate choices, and to assume responsibilities for the consequences of these choices. These concepts should be the foundation on which a bilingual program is built.

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